United Nations A/CN.10/PV.283

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

283rd meeting

Tuesday, 18 March 2008, 4.30 p.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Rosselli ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 4.30 p.m.

Opening of the session

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I declare open the 2008 organizational session of the Disarmament Commission.

As in past years, the Commission has convened today for what is normally a brief session to deal with organizational matters, including the election of the Chairman and of other members of the Bureau for 2008. This time, we are not going to adopt the agenda, since it was adopted in 2006 for the full three-year cycle covering the period from 2006 to 2008. Under the relevant item 5 of the order of the day we will take note of the agenda and, if needed, will make changes.

In addition, the Commission will be asked to take up the issue of the appointment of the Chairman of Working Group II. As members are aware, in accordance with General Assembly decision 52/492 of September 1998, both working group Chairpersons were elected for three years. However, due to circumstances, Mr. Carlos Duarte, who so resolutely and ably chaired the proceedings of Working Group II, was recalled by his capital and assumed a new important duty in the Brazilian foreign ministry that does not allow him to join this year's deliberations of the Working Group.

Adoption of the agenda

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish now to draw the Commission's attention to the provisional agenda for this organizational session, as contained in document A/CN.10/L.60. Are there any comments on this draft agenda? If I hear none, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the agenda as contained in document A/CN.10/L.60.

The agenda was adopted.

Election of the Chairman and other officers

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the established practice of rotation, it is the Group of Western European and other States that has the honour to nominate the candidate for the post of Chairman of the Commission for its 2008 substantive session. I have received a note from the Chairman of that Group informing me that the Group has endorsed the candidature of Mr. Pieter de Klerk, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations, for the chairmanship of the Commission for its 2008 session.

If I hear no objection, I will take it that it is the wish of the Commission to elect Mr. Pieter de Klerk as the Chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Commission by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Commission and on my own behalf, I congratulate Mr. Pieter de Klerk on his election to this high office. I believe I express the view commonly shared by those who know him and his background when I say that the Commission will benefit enormously from his wide

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experience and professional skills. We wish Mr. De Klerk success in discharging his newly assumed important duties. On our part, we will remain at his service with support and counsel, as need be. I conclude my chairmanship of the Commission by thanking all members for the cooperation they extended to me during my term and all the staff members of the secretariat who worked at my side throughout the year.

I invite Mr. Pieter de Klerk to take his place at the podium and to assume the chairmanship.

Mr. De Klerk (Netherlands) took the Chair.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: At the outset, allow me to express my gratitude to the members of the Commission for electing me as the new Chairman of the Disarmament Commission and the important task entrusted to me to chair this organizational session. I also want to thank the previous Chairman and all members for the kind words and wishes addressed to me. I count on the support and cooperation of all member States in achieving the important goals of the Commission.

Before I turn to the next item on our agenda, allow me to pay a well-deserved tribute to the Chairman of the Commission at its 2007 substantive session, Ambassador Elbio Rosselli, for the guidance and leadership he provided to the Commission. My gratitude also goes to other members of the Bureau for their valiant and tireless efforts. Finally, let me thank delegations for their constructive spirit and cooperation during the past year of deliberations of the Commission.

Of course, it was a disappointment for all of us that, at the end of the day, it was not possible to overcome the remaining obstacles to the successful conclusion of the Commission's work in 2007. It is not an easy task to achieve a perfect balance of interests on issues that go to the core of security concepts.

However, despite the inability of the Commission to reach a substantive consensus, I am pleased to note that during last year's deliberations we came close to agreement. While introducing the draft resolution in the First Committee, Ambassador Rosselli, the Commission Chairman, pointed to all the positive elements in the debates and to the overwhelming agreement among Member States on the importance of the Disarmament Commission.

So much for 2007; it is the past. Let me now turn to the future. I would like to invite the Commission to the future and make a few general observations as I see them.

The 2008 international disarmament calendar is, once more, a full one, and the outside world — the community of nations — expects a lot from those events. The expectations are rooted in a number of factors; allow me to mention just a few.

First of all, despite the fact that the last four years have not been the easiest and most productive years for the international multilateral disarmament machinery, I still believe that the present international climate not only calls for urgent measures but also allows for a wide variety of undertakings in the field of disarmament. Opportunities are presenting themselves. We all share a vision of a more secure and peaceful world, and we have the resolve to work towards its realization. In doing so, we can build on the work of our predecessors and on the achievements of which we can rightfully be proud.

Secondly, the inability of the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission to yield tangible results has contributed to a heightened sense of urgency in the international community on the need to reform and revitalize the disarmament machinery in such a way that it starts to react and respond better to emerging threats to global peace and security. That sense of urgency adds to the existing heavy responsibility, which we bear collectively and individually. What happens within these walls is not an isolated event. It is an integral part of global disarmament efforts at all levels, be it governmental or non-governmental.

Thirdly, the emergence of new threats and the need to deal with them without further delay have created a new atmosphere among politicians, disarmament professionals, non-governmental organizations, the academic community and the public at large. I hope that this overall atmosphere of great expectations will positively influence the work of the Disarmament Commission in 2008. And here I should refer again to the expressions of wide support for the Commission that came during the First Committee session from practically all delegations. Even the criticism levied at the Commission was of a

constructive nature. Nobody questioned its overall usefulness. Rather, delegations pointed to the shortcomings and spoke in a businesslike manner of the ways and means to make the Commission's work more relevant and responsive to immediate security challenges. We base our approach to this year's session of the Disarmament Commission on this support and expressed goodwill.

I now propose that we continue with the third item on our agenda, the election of the other officers of the Disarmament Commission for 2008.

As is the case with the Chair, other officers of the Bureau are also elected on the basis of the established principle of rotation. Accordingly, it is the turn of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States to nominate the Rapporteur of the Commission for the 2008 substantive session. I was informed that consultations are still going on within the Group as to its candidate for that post, so the Commission will take up the election of the Rapporteur at a later date.

Now I suggest that we proceed to the election of the officers of the Bureau. The Group of African States, the Group of Asian States, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Group of Western European and Other States have successfully concluded their respective consultations and have endorsed their candidates for vacant posts of Vice-Chairs. As for the candidates of the Group of Eastern European States, I was informed that the consultations are still going on and we can address this issue at a later stage.

We will now proceed with nominations. I give the floor to the representative of Solomon Islands.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Asian Group as its Chair for the month of March.

I would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, on your assumption of the Chair of the Commission. No doubt the expectations that you have just outlined will be met. We wish you well in your current position.

I would like to announce the two Asian Vice-Chairs whom the Group of Asian States has chosen. They are the Philippines and Uzbekistan.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Solomon Islands for the nomination of representatives of the Philippines and Uzbekistan as Vice-Chairmen of the Commission from the Group of Asian States.

I now give the floor to the representative of Cape Verde.

Mr. Monteiro Cardoso (Cape Verde) (*spoke in French*): The Group of African States has chosen Benin and Cameroon as Vice-Chairs.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Cape Verde for the nomination of the representatives of Benin and Cameroon as Vice-Chairmen of the Commission from the Group of African States.

I now give the floor to the representative of Venezuela.

Ms. Leong (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election as Chair of the Disarmament Commission for its substantive session of 2008. We assure you of the help and support of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States in your task.

With regard to the Bureau, our group has endorsed the candidacy of Peru for the post of Vice-Chairman for our region. We have also decided to support having Brazil continue as Chair of Working Group II of the Commission, with Carlos Luis Dantas Perez in that office.

With regard to the position of Rapporteur, our Group is still continuing consultations and will bring the outcome as soon as we have it.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Venezuela for the nomination of the representative of Peru as Vice-Chairman of the Commission from that Group.

I now give the floor to the representative of Germany to speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States.

Mr. Heinze (Germany): On behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States, I would like first to congratulate you Mr. Chairman, on taking over this important post. We wish you a lot of success, and you will have our support during the next meeting of the Disarmament Commission.

The Group of Western European and Other States has nominated France for Vice-Chair of the Commission.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Germany for his nomination of the representative of France as Vice-Chairman of the Commission.

If I hear no comment, I will take it that the Commission wishes to elect representatives of Benin, Cameroon, France, Peru, the Philippines and Uzbekistan as Vice-Chairmen of the Commission of the 2008 substantive session by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: Allow me on behalf of the Commission to warmly congratulate all elected officers and wish them success in discharging their duties. I am looking forward to working with them and other fellow Bureau members.

Review of the resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-second session relating to the Disarmament Commission

The Chairman: As members of the Commission are aware, the First Committee recommended for adoption by the General Assembly a resolution that has specific bearing on the work of the Commission. For the sake of clarity and for the benefit of members of the Commission, I would like to refer to that resolution — resolution 62/54, entitled "Report of the Disarmament Commission" — which was adopted by the General Assembly on 5 December under agenda item 100 (a). The relevant paragraphs of the resolution — namely, operative paragraphs 7 and 8 — read as follows:

> "7. Recommends that the Disarmament Commission continue the consideration of the following items at its 2008 substantive session:
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> "(a) Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons;
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> "(b) Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons;
>
> "8. Requests the Disarmament Commission to meet for a period not exceeding three weeks during 2008, namely from 7 to 24 April, and to submit a substantive report to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session".

Draft provisional agenda for the 2008 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission

The Chairman: Members of the Commission will be aware of General Assembly decision 52/492 of 1998 that substantive agenda items on the Commission's agenda should be considered for three years. The previous Chairman referred to that earlier. In that regard, the Commission should take note of the provisional agenda as adopted in 2006. I refer members to that earlier agenda, contained in document A/CN.10/L.57. At this stage, no changes or amendments are required.

As I hear no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to act accordingly and to take a note of the provisional agenda for the 2008 substantive session, as contained in document A/CN.10/L.57.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: The Commission is also invited to take note of document A/CN.10/2008/CRP.1, entitled "Provisional programme of work", containing somewhat detailed information on the three weeks of our future work. It is an indicative programme and we will make changes in it if there is any need.

Organizational matters

The Chairman: The United Nations Disarmament Commission is a subsidiary body of the General Assembly and meets annually. Its sessions are financed from regular budgets and do not require additional funding. Moreover, in accordance with decision 52/492, to which I referred earlier, the 2008 substantive session of the Commission should last from 7 to 24 April. With that in mind, the Secretariat has arranged those dates, representing a period of nearly three weeks, the last day of the three weeks being Friday, 25 April, which coincides with Orthodox Good Friday. Allow me to add that those dates were chosen taking into consideration the disarmament calendar for the coming month and especially the second preparatory meeting for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which will immediately follow the Commission's substantive session. Delegations are kindly requested to make note of those dates.

Let me also address the establishment of the working groups to deal with the two substantive agenda items, as mentioned in General Assembly

resolution 62/54. I suggest that we now formally re-establish Working Groups I and II to deal with the two specific items. Moreover, as in previous years, we have to establish the Committee of the Whole to deal with other substantive and organizational matters.

As I hear no comments, I will take it that the Commission wishes to establish those three bodies.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I should like to note that, according to the established practice, all organizational matters should be concluded at the organizational session of the Disarmament Commission. Unfortunately, as I have already informed the Commission, we are not in a position to deal with the appointment of the remaining Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur, since the regional groups will have to agree on their respective candidates. Accordingly, it might be advisable for the Commission to conclude this organizational session, give the delegations time to carry on further consultations on that issue, and take up the election at the first meeting of the plenary.

Before we do so, however, I want to ask the Commission to address the issue of the appointment of a new Chairman of Working Group II. We have already heard the representative of Venezuela on that issue. He mentioned the name of Mr. Carlos Luis Dantas Perez as the candidate for Chairman of the Working Group.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that it is the wish of the Commission members to nominate Mr. Carlos Luis Dantas Perez as the Chair of Working Group II.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: Allow me on behalf of the membership to congratulate Mr. Carlos Luis Dantas Perez on his election to the Chairmanship of the Working Group II. I wish him success and pledge my full support, as well as the support of the Bureau in carrying out his important and difficult task.

I call on the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Ruddyard (Indonesia): I am speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

At the outset, let me congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 2008 substantive session. I also extend my felicitations to the other members of the Bureau on their appointments.

I also wish to thank the previous Chairman and his Bureau for their tireless efforts in organizing and steering last year's meetings.

NAM is confident, Sir, that your leadership, along with the support of your Bureau, including the Chairs of the two Working Groups, will help the Commission successfully to fulfil the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly. We are aware that the cooperation of all member States will be vital in building understanding and agreement on the profound issues before us.

NAM, for its part, assures members of its full support and cooperation in working concretely to achieve the goals of the Commission. We need to make every effort to achieve specific recommendations on the items on the agenda. This is the final session of the three-year cycle; indeed, hopes are rightly pinned on the positive outcome of this session.

As to Working Group I on recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, I should like to reiterate that NAM, at the last session, put forth its ideas and proposals in the form of a working paper to that Group. We hope that there will be tangible progress on those during this session.

With regard to Working Group II, we note that, while some progress has been achieved, there is still work to be done. The Movement calls on all States to focus on the remaining issues for their resolution.

Finally, let me say once again that NAM stands ready to work actively with you, Sir, the Chairs of the Working Groups and the Bureau, along with, of course, all member States to realize a positive outcome at this session.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Indonesia for his kind words. I assure him that I fully share his determination to make progress in both Working Groups and in the Commission as a whole.

If there are no more pressing issues to discuss, I will take it that it is the wish of the Disarmament Commission to conclude the 2008 organizational session and to resume the unfinished organizational business at a later date.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: Before I conclude this meeting, I should like to encourage regional groups to proceed with their consultations on an urgent basis and to submit their nominations as quickly as possible.

The next meeting of the Disarmament Commission will take place on Monday, 7 April at 10 a.m. in Conference Room 4, as will be announced in the *Journal* of the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.